

1 WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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3 1. A computer system for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a  
4 plurality of users using a plurality of carriers, said computer system comprising:  
5 a plurality of server computer devices,  
6 wherein each server computer device is programmed to perform a plurality of  
7 activities in support of a particular function, wherein each server computer device is  
8 programmed to support a different particular function, and wherein each particular function  
9 contributes to managing shipping of the plurality of parcels.  
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11 2. The computer system of Claim 1, said plurality of server computer devices of  
12 said computer system further comprising:  
13 a first server computer programmed to communicate with each of the plurality of  
14 users over multiple telecommunications connections over the global communications  
15 network at one time.  
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17 3. The computer system of Claim 2, said plurality of server computer devices of  
18 said computer system further comprising:  
19 a second server computer programmed to obtain data from at least one system  
20 database in response to each user input of a request by each particular user to ship a parcel.  
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22 4. The computer system of Claim 3, said plurality of server computer devices of  
23 said computer system further comprising:  
24 a third server computer programmed to use the data obtained for shipping the parcel  
25 to calculate a first shipping rate for a first carrier to ship the parcel and to calculate a second  
26 shipping rate for a second carrier to ship the parcel.  
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28 5. The computer system of Claim 4, said plurality of server computer devices of  
29 said computer system further comprising:

1 a fourth server computer programmed to obtain carrier tracking information from each  
2 of a plurality of carrier computer systems accessible over the global communications  
3 network.

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5 6. A computer system for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a  
6 plurality of users using a plurality of carriers, wherein each user accesses the computer  
7 system over a global communications network using a client computer device, each user  
8 client computer device having an individual electronic connection to the global  
9 communications network, said computer system comprising:

10 a plurality of server computer devices,  
11 wherein a first server computer is programmed to communicate with each of the  
12 plurality of users over multiple telecommunications connections over the global  
13 communications network at one time; and

14 wherein a second server computer is programmed to obtain carrier tracking  
15 information from each of a plurality of carrier computer systems accessible over the global  
16 communications network.

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18 7. A computer system for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a  
19 plurality of users using a plurality of carriers, wherein each user accesses the computer  
20 system over a global communications network using a client computer device, each user  
21 client computer device having an individual electronic connection to the global  
22 communications network, said computer system comprising:

23 a plurality of server computer devices,  
24 wherein a first server computer is programmed to communicate with each of the  
25 plurality of users over multiple telecommunications connections over a global  
26 communications network at one time;

27 wherein a second server computer is programmed to obtain data from at least one  
28 system database in response to each user input of a request by each particular user to ship a  
29 parcel; and

1 wherein a third server computer is programmed to use the data obtained for shipping  
2 the parcel to calculate a first shipping rate for a first carrier to ship the parcel and to calculate  
3 a second shipping rate for a second carrier to ship the parcel.

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5 8. The computer system of Claim 2 wherein a fourth server computer is  
6 programmed to obtain carrier tracking information from each of a plurality of carrier  
7 computer systems accessible over the global communications network.

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9 9. A method of configuring a plurality of server computer devices for managing  
10 shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of carriers, wherein  
11 each server computer device is connected to and communicates with at least one other server  
12 computer device of the plurality of server computer devices, said method comprising:

13 programming each of the plurality of server computer devices to perform a plurality  
14 of activities in support of a particular function, wherein each server computer device is  
15 programmed to support a different particular function, and wherein each particular function  
16 contributes to managing shipping of the plurality of parcels.

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18 10. The method of Claim 9 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices  
19 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of  
20 carriers, said method further comprising:

21 programming each subset of a plurality of subsets of said server computer devices to  
22 support a particular function wherein each subset of server computer devices comprises at  
23 least one server computer device.

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25 11. The method of Claim 10 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices  
26 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of  
27 carriers, said method further comprising:

28 programming each subset of the plurality of subsets of said server computer devices  
29 to support a different particular function than is supported by any other subset of server

1 computer devices.

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3 12. The method of Claim 9 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices  
4 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of  
5 carriers, said method further comprising:

6 programming a first server computer device to communicate with each of the plurality  
7 of users over multiple telecommunications connections over the global communications  
8 network at one time.

9  
10 13. The method of Claim 12 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices  
11 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of  
12 carriers, said method further comprising:

13 programming a second server computer device to obtain data from at least one system  
14 database in response to each user input of a request by each particular user to ship a parcel.

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16 14. The method of Claim 13 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices  
17 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of  
18 carriers, said method further comprising:

19 programming a third server computer device to use the data obtained for shipping the  
20 parcel to calculate a first shipping rate for a first carrier to ship the parcel and to calculate a  
21 second shipping rate for a second carrier to ship the parcel.

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23 15. The method of Claim 14 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices  
24 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of  
25 carriers, said method further comprising:

26 programming a fourth server computer device to obtain carrier tracking information  
27 from each of a plurality of carrier computer systems accessible over the global  
28 communications network.

1           16.     The method of Claim 9 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices  
2     for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of  
3     carriers, said method further comprising:

4           programming a first subset of server computer devices to communicate with each of  
5     the plurality of users over multiple telecommunications connections over the global  
6     communications network at one time.

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8           17.     The method of Claim 16 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices  
9     for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of  
10    carriers, said method further comprising:

11           programming a second subset of server computer devices to obtain data from at least  
12    one system database in response to each user input of a request by each particular user to  
13    ship a parcel.

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15           18.     The method of Claim 17 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices  
16    for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of  
17    carriers, said method further comprising:

18           programming a third subset of server computer devices to use the data obtained for  
19    shipping the parcel to calculate a first shipping rate for a first carrier to ship the parcel and to  
20    calculate a second shipping rate for a second carrier to ship the parcel.

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22           ~~19.20.~~   The method of Claim 19 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices  
23    for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of  
24    carriers, said method further comprising:

25           programming a fourth subset of server computer devices to obtain carrier tracking  
26    information from each of a plurality of carrier computer systems accessible over the global  
27    communications network.

1 ~~20~~ 21. A computer program product embodying computer program instructions for  
2 execution by a computer for configuring a plurality of server computer devices for managing  
3 shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of carriers, said  
4 computer program product comprising:

5 a set of program instructions instructing each of the plurality of server computer  
6 devices to perform a plurality of activities in support of a particular function, wherein the set  
7 of program instructions programs each server computer device to support a different  
8 particular function, and wherein each particular function contributes to managing shipping of  
9 the plurality of parcels.

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11 ~~21~~ 22. The computer program product of Claim 21, said computer program product  
12 further comprising:

13 a set of program instructions instructing each subset of a plurality of subsets of said  
14 server computer devices to support a particular function wherein each subset of server  
15 computer devices comprises at least one server computer device.

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17 ~~22~~ 23. The computer program product of Claim 22, said computer program product  
18 further comprising:

19 a set of program instructions instructing each subset of the plurality of subsets of said  
20 server computer devices to support a different particular function than is supported by any  
21 other subset of server computer devices.

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23 ~~23~~ 24. The computer program product of Claim 23, said computer program product  
24 further comprising:

25 a set of program instructions instructing a first server computer device to  
26 communicate with each of the plurality of users over multiple telecommunications  
27 connections over the global communications network at one time.

1       ~~24~~ 25.     The computer program product of Claim 24, said computer program product  
2 further comprising:

3             a set of program instructions instructing a second server computer device to obtain  
4 data from at least one system database in response to each user input of a request by each  
5 particular user to ship a parcel.

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7       ~~25~~ 26.     The computer program product of Claim 25, said computer program product  
8 further comprising:

9             a set of program instructions instructing a third server computer device to use the data  
10 obtained for shipping the parcel to calculate a first shipping rate for a first carrier to ship the  
11 parcel and to calculate a second shipping rate for a second carrier to ship the parcel.

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13       ~~26~~ 27.     The computer program product of Claim 26, said computer program product  
14 further comprising:

15             a set of program instructions instructing a fourth server computer device to obtain  
16 carrier tracking information from each of a plurality of carrier computer systems accessible  
17 over the global communications network.

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19       ~~27~~ 28.     The computer program product of Claim 27, said computer program product  
20 further comprising:

21             a set of program instructions instructing a first subset of server computer devices to  
22 communicate with each of the plurality of users over multiple telecommunications  
23 connections over the global communications network at one time.

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25       ~~28~~ 29.     The computer program product of Claim 28, said computer program product  
26 further comprising:

27             a set of program instructions instructing a second subset of server computer devices to  
28 obtain data from at least one system database in response to each user input of a request by  
29 each particular user to ship a parcel.

1 ~~29~~ 30. The computer program product of Claim 29, said computer program product  
2 further comprising:

3 a set of program instructions instructing a third subset of server computer devices to  
4 use the data obtained for shipping the parcel to calculate a first shipping rate for a first carrier  
5 to ship the parcel and to calculate a second shipping rate for a second carrier to ship the  
6 parcel.

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8 31. The computer program product of Claim 30, said computer program product  
9 further comprising:

10 a set of program instructions instructing a fourth subset of server computer devices to  
11 obtain carrier tracking information from each of a plurality of carrier computer systems  
12 accessible over the global communications network.

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